

Edinburgh Schools Debating at Holyrood



Scotland's finest young debaters to test their skills at Holyrood and two Edinburgh schools, Craigmount High and St Mary's Music School, will be taking part.

'This House believes that the internet encourages democracy' will be the topic debated on Thursday at Holyrood when more than a hundred of Scotland's finest high school debaters gather to compete against each other in the Grand Final of the Donald Dewar Memorial Debating Tournament 2013.

This year, 128 teams from across Scotland have sharpened their debating skills and come through a series of heats on subjects including the banning of extremist political parties and the introduction of a 100% inheritance tax.

Established in 1999, Scotland's largest annual schools debating tournament is open to pupils in all Scottish secondary schools. The competition aims to promote an understanding of the importance of debate, advocacy and communication to the legal profession, democracy and society at large. Organised and run by The Law Society of Scotland, the tournament is dedicated to the memory of the late First Minister Donald Dewar MSP, who died in 2000.

Deputy Presiding Officer John Scott MSP, who will chair the final said:

"The annual Dewar Debate provides an opportunity for young people from across Scotland to express their views on topics affecting them and to test their debating skills in the

Scottish Parliament's Chamber. With 128 teams taking part in this year's competition, the four finalists have done extremely well in getting this far and I look forward to what promises to be lively and topical debate in the grand final."

The four teams in this year's final are:

1. St Margaret's Academy, West Lothian – Caitlin Sutherland and Shannon Russell.
2. Kirkcudbright Academy, Dumfries and Galloway – Iona Bonaventura and Lydia Reilly.
3. Glenalmond College, Perthshire – Simon Boedermaker and Marcus Buist.
4. Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen – Tom Sanders and Morag Forbes.

Also taking part in a debate on the floor of the Chamber are students from 9 schools that took part in the tournament this year:

- * Craigmount High, Edinburgh
- * The Glasgow Academy, Glasgow
- * The High School of Dundee, Dundee
- * Lanark Grammar School, South Lanarkshire
- * Linwood High, Renfrewshire
- * Menzieshill High School, Dundee
- * St Aloysius' College, Glasgow
- * St Mary's Music School, Edinburgh
- * Trinity High, Renfrewshire

Heather McKendrick, The Law Society of Scotland's education and training and development officer, added:

"It has been a fantastic tournament once again and all the teams who have reached the final are to be congratulated, particularly when you consider the number of teams taking part in the opening rounds and the calibre of our competitors.

"It's a real honour to be able to host the tournament final in the debating chamber of the Parliament for the seventh time

and I'm sure it will be a very exciting and memorable experience for all those taking part."

The winning school will receive a trophy and prize of £1,000, donated by the Law Society of Scotland, and runners-up will receive £250, donated by The Glasgow Bar association. All finalists receive individual Quaiches and certificates to commemorate their success and this year's sponsors Hodder Gibson Publishers will donate educational books to the value of £500, to be shared by the winning and runner-up school.

The judges for the event are:

- * Jon Dye, Former Chairman of the English Speaking Union (Presiding Judge).
- * Irene McGrath, Chair of the Scottish Schools International Debating Council
- * Neil Stevenson, former Trustee of the English Speaking Union
- * Aissa Watson, former Head of Speech and Debate at the English Speaking Union
- * and Adam McKinlay, Coach of the Scotland team, World Schools Debating Championships